



CONNECTICUT AFL-CIO

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Testimony before the Higher Education and Advancement Committee Thursday, March 4th, 2010

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Advancement committee, my name is Lori Pelletier and I serve as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, which has over 900 affiliated local unions representing the working men and women from every one of our 169 cities and towns, and am here to testify in favor of the following bills.

H.B. No. 5368 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND.

Last May, President Obama stated "Now is the time to put a new foundation for growth in place—to rebuild our economy, to retrain our workforce, and re-equip the American people. And now is the time to change unemployment from a period of "wait and see" to a chance for our workers to train and seek the next opportunity—so when that new and better day does come around, our people, our industry, and our entire country are ready to make the most of it." HB 5368 does just that. We applaud the committee for raising this bill and paying attention to the needs of Connecticut families.

In a recent report released by the Institute for America's future, it states that "As the economy recovers and begins generating jobs again, it is vital that workers have the skills they need to maximize opportunities. Many newly created jobs will be "middle skill" jobs such as nurses, welders, and database managers. These occupations require significant education and training beyond the high school level but not a four-year degree. Educating people to plug the gap and fill these middle-skill jobs is critical, especially for low-skill workers to take advantage of emerging job opportunities, and for businesses to grow with the skilled workforce they need."

We couldn't agree more. Connecticut is poised to move out in front when it comes to emerging technologies. We already lead the way in the numbers of our citizens employed in the area of fuel cell technology. By commanding 13% of the worldwide fuel cell employment we are a leg up on all competition. Let's not lose this lead. By investing today we will be rewarded down the road. If Connecticut workers can manufacture, assemble and test products such as helicopters, aircraft engines and submarines we can certainly handle solar, wind and fuel cell work. But investment is key, and again we support this legislation and will work to see its passage and signing into law.

Thank you to the Committee for holding this public hearing and if you have any question I'd be happy to address them.

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